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## Jenkins, KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IN THOMAS AQUINAS

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entirely intelligible and defensible, but to be crucial in making available to us an understanding of God as being transcendent in a way that, for different reasons, has so eluded Anselmians and negative theologians alike. What they, and process theologians too, have thought to be a most unlikely God is in fact the God who created us" (168). Challenges like that deserve the closest possible attention, even if that should lead us to question many a cherished presumption. Moreover, those whom Barry Miller's work may have encouraged to give classical formulations a second look, even to acknowledge the sophistication they can bring to current debate, would profit by Harm J. M. J. Goris' *Free Creatures of an Eternal God* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), which also engages contemporary analytic discussions; and in a more theological vein, Thomas Weinandy's recent *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

## NOTES

1. For a lucid account of the implications for faith and for philosophy of "the distinction" of creator from creatures, see Robert Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982 / Washington DC: Catholic University of American Press, 1993)

*Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas*, by John I. Jenkins, C.S.C. Cambridge, 1997, Pp. xv, 267.

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Aquinas's doctrines on knowledge and faith, Jenkins argues, have been misunderstood. He has been read as if answering modern questions, and so his own "conceptual framework" has been largely ignored. Specifically, many have misunderstood Aquinas's view of *scientia* and how that affects his views of theology (*sacra doctrina*), the purpose and structure of the *Summa Theologiae*, and the light of faith. His book is an attempt to remedy these defects.

The book covers a lot of ground, and does so interestingly and competently. The reader will find treated here not only the subjects just mentioned, but also Aquinas's basic theories of epistemology, free choice, nature, will, appetite, and principles of natural law.

The main task of the book is to explain how according to Aquinas theology is a *scientia*, or an Aristotelian *epistémē*. This has more than antiquarian interest. Aquinas's view of theology at first seems rather dry: to say it is a science, even in the Aristotelian sense, seems a straight-jacket. But when one understands how according to Aquinas theology is a sharing in the *scientia* of God himself, Aquinas's position emerges as both an exalted view of theology's dignity and a frank acknowledgment of its limitations.

According to Aquinas, following Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, *scientia* is an understanding of why things have the necessary properties they have—an understanding "not just of the fact, but of the reasoned fact." For example, to know that metals readily conduct heat and electricity is not *scientia*,

but to understand *why* they do so is. Understanding this involves grasping a particular type of syllogism, a demonstration that explains the proper reason why metals have their properties, in other words, a demonstration in which the premises state the necessary and proper cause and the conclusion states the effect. A rough (contemporary) example: Metals readily conduct electricity (conclusion), because metals are substances composed of free electrons (premise stating the proper cause). Moreover, following Aristotle, Aquinas insists that one has *scientia* only if the premises in one's demonstration are *necessary*, are known better than the conclusion, and one's knowledge of the conclusion is the cause of one's knowledge of the effect.

The difficulty for this account of scientific knowledge is that, except in mathematics, the causes never seem to be better known than the effects. Indeed, a central tenet of Aquinas (and Aristotle) is that substances are known through their actions, not by direct intuition. Thus Aristotle and Aquinas recognize that in natural science one initially, at least, understands better the effects, and indeed one infers to the nature of the cause through the effects. These are called demonstrations *quia* (from effect to cause), as opposed to demonstrations *propter quid* (from the proper and immediate cause to the effect). And of course something similar occurs in metaphysics. So in non-mathematical sciences one often begins with *quia* demonstrations (a proof that a metal is a substance composed of free electrons) before arriving at *propter quid* demonstration (an explanation why metals have their properties, based on their intrinsic nature).

Jenkins argues that for Aquinas (and Aristotle), this difficulty is resolved by one's seeing that one does indeed (outside mathematics) *initially* know the effect better than the cause. But in a second stage, one constructs a *propter quid* demonstration (from proper and immediate cause to effect); and one then achieves a "cognitive re-structuring." That is, after obtaining the *propter quid* demonstration, one acquires such a familiarity with the causes in the field under study that one comes to understand the effects on the grounds of the causes (45-50). This requirement for *scientia*—that the causes be (or come to be) better known than the effects—has been ignored by commentators, says Jenkins, but it has important consequences for Aquinas's understanding of theology.

But there are difficulties in accepting that theology, *sacra doctrina*, is truly a *scientia*. For the principles of theology are the articles of faith, professed in the creed. The causes are not better known than the effects. And the principles are believed, not known. Aquinas's answer to these difficulties is that theology is a *subalternated science*. It accepts its principles from a higher science. For example, optics is a genuine science but it accepts its principles from geometry, and so it is subalternated to geometry. Theology, says Aquinas, is subalternated to the science which God himself possesses.

Yet difficulties remain. M.D. Chenu argued that Aquinas himself, if only in one passage in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, admitted that theology was only a "*quasi*-subalternated" science. And Chenu argued that theology does not fit the *Posterior Analytics*' notion of science—even a sub-alternated one—because it does not have a subject matter distinct from the superior science whence it borrows its principles. Moreover, the propositions in theology are not universal (they concern God, the Incarnation, etc.), and many

of them are not necessary (since God freely became man, for example).

Jenkins answers these difficulties by first pointing out that in Aquinas the term "*scientia*" is used analogously, and applied not only to human science, but also to divine and angelic knowledge. Significantly, God's *scientia* is not concerned only with universal and necessary truths, but is of singular, contingent and temporally indexed truths as well (63). The *Posterior Analytics* presented the requirements of human *scientia*. Human *scientia* must be of the universal and necessary: since humans know things through their actions on their senses, they can have "*certa cognitio rei*" (certain knowledge of a thing) only if (in the aspect in which it is understood) the thing known cannot be otherwise and cannot change. But this is not true of divine *scientia*. God knows things other than himself by causing them—as a craftsman knows his product. And since God is outside of time, what is future and thus undetermined with respect to us is not future, and so is in a way present, with respect to God. And God knows it as present to him. Hence God knows even singular, temporally conditioned, and contingent entities with a certain and infallible knowledge (65).

Divine *scientia* is perfect knowledge and involves a knowing of why things are as they are, and thus fits the core requirements of *scientia* as set out in *Posterior Analytics*. Yet divine *scientia* is not discursive, not obtained from sensation, not confined to the universal and necessary, and not obtained by demonstration. Thus it is clear that the secondary requirements of *scientia* set out in *Posterior Analytics* apply only to human *scientia*. But theology is not a purely human *scientia*. Humans cannot naturally know God's nature, mind or decisions, and so they can acquire knowledge of these—which constitute the principles as it were of divine *scientia*—only by faith. So, theology obtains its principles by faith, that is, by accepting them from God, who has divine *scientia* of them. Thus, theology is a participation in divine *scientia*, and as such has some of its characteristics, though in only an imperfect manner. In theology humans begin to see even singular and contingent facts in the manner in which God understands them, for example, as directed to his plan. Thus, "sacred doctrine [theology] differs from merely human *scientiae* . . . not because it is deficient or merely quasi *scientia*, but because in it humans participate, albeit imperfectly, in the highest and most perfect *scientia*, that of God" (76).

Only if the act of faith does involve a real sharing in God's *scientia* will the above interpretation of Aquinas make sense. Thus Part 2 defends this interpretation of theology by examining the manner in which its principles are grasped, namely, through the "light of faith."

Before interpreting Aquinas on the light of faith, Jenkins presents his interpretation of Aquinas on the natural light of the intellect. By this light, says Jenkins, one's basic natural beliefs (perceptual and self-evident) are justified and have warrant. According to Jenkins, Aquinas holds that first principles and perceptual judgments are basic (self-justified) and have an externalist warrant. That is, they are warranted because they result from the proper operations of faculties naturally oriented (designed by God) to arrive at truth.

Jenkins rightly rejects the naturalist interpretation of Aquinas on faith. On the naturalist interpretation, the act of faith rests on natural argu-

ments—arguments of credibility—showing the fact that God has revealed. A consequence of the naturalist view is that one's certainty could rise no higher than the arguments of credibility, and those attain only to "moral" certainty, that is, certainty sufficient only for practical decisions. Jenkins successfully shows this is inaccurate: for Aquinas, the credibility arguments play a role in assent (according to Jenkins, they only dispose one to be attentive to what is preached), but they are not sufficient motives for the absolutely firm assent of one who has the supernatural virtue of faith.

Perhaps the standard interpretation of Aquinas is the one Jenkins calls "voluntarist." Faith is an act of assent to what is testified to or revealed, not what is seen. The voluntarist interpretation is that the will freely moves the intellect to assent, for the sake of the good or the promise of eternal life. Jenkins refers to Eleanor Stump and James Ross as proponents of this interpretation.

Jenkins calls his own interpretation "supernaturalist externalism." On this interpretation the *lumen fidei*, the infused light of faith, plays a central role. Aquinas writes: "Faith can be called an argument [that is, evidence] insofar as the infused light, which is the habit of faith, makes manifest the articles [of faith], just as the intellectual light makes principles naturally known" (quoted by Jenkins at 190, from the *Commentary on the Sentences*). On Jenkins' interpretation, by the supernatural light of faith one perceives that the gospel is divinely revealed, and so one's act of faith is warranted. That is, one's act of faith is not motivated by reasons or signs of credibility (for example, one's awareness of miracles, or historical arguments, and so on); these do play a role, but only that of paving the way, or removing obstacles. They are not intrinsic motivating factors in the act of faith. Jenkins says: "[B]y virtue of the infused light of faith and with the theological virtue along with the Gift of Understanding, the prospective believer, by a non-discursive intuition, understands the articles of faith as propositions to be believed on divine authority and to which he should adhere in spite of considerations to the contrary."

Why is this act epistemically justified? How is it epistemically warranted? (These two are not the same. Justification refers to grounds of one's belief, of which one must be aware. Following Plantinga, Jenkins means by warrant that feature which, added to true belief, renders it knowledge: for Jenkins, this involves proper functioning of one's cognitive powers.) It is justified, says Jenkins, as a basic belief—its justification does not depend on any other beliefs. And it is warranted, he says, "at least in part, because A) the individual's cognitive faculties have been heightened so that they have acquired a design with which he can discover the truth about putative divine revelations (i.e. as to whether or not they are genuine) and because (B) the individual's assent to the articles was produced and is sustained by such heightened cognitive faculties when operating properly." (197)

But if faith involves a perception, by the light of faith, that the gospel is divinely revealed, how can it also be voluntary, as Aquinas insists it is? Indeed, this is perhaps the chief reason interpreters such as Ross and Stump have concluded that for Aquinas the act of faith is *not* epistemically justified. They reasoned that, being voluntary, it must not be epistemically

justified, and so the will must "bridge the gap" in the evidence.

Jenkins' answer is that the act of faith is free because the perception of the divine origin of the gospel requires a good (or at least open) character, and this character is freely formed. He points out that Aquinas has a *diachronic*, not *synchronic*, view of freedom.

On a *synchronic* view, a choice is free only if one could, at the moment of choice, choose another option. However, Aquinas has a *diachronic* view. "[W]hether a prospective end appears good to a person depends upon his character, which consists of habits. But since this character has been produced by past free actions, whatever appears good to him because of his character is also voluntary, even though he may not, at the moment of choice, have any control over this character and how things appear to him." (206) Jenkins argues that a person has a *diachronic* voluntariness or freedom in the act of faith. Through the supernatural gift of faith one is moved to grasp the articles as divinely revealed and to be believed. "If one is of a bad character, however, this understanding may be obscured or repressed. If one is, for instance, proud, assent to the articles may appear bad to one, for faith requires that one's intellect be subject to God's teaching." (208) It is, Jenkins explains, very much a matter of what one focuses on. A person's pride, or other vices, leads him to focus on apparent implausibilities of the claims of faith. Thus, the will's role is not to traverse a gap in evidence (as the voluntarists argue) but, "the will plays a role because in most cases it, and our habits and character which are shaped by it, influence the way we evaluate the evidence." (208) In my judgment this suggestion is important: whether one accepts his interpretation as a whole, this view of faith's voluntariness—*diachronic* rather than *synchronic*—seems to be a more accurate description of how acts of faith occur. Jenkins points out that an interesting view of the relation between virtue and epistemic merit is implicit in Aquinas's account. "He seems to imply that moral virtues and vices, which enable us to act well or poorly in non-epistemic matters, also enable one to act well or poorly in attaining the epistemic goal of believing truths and disbelieving falsehoods." (209)

I believe Jenkins' case for his interpretation in the first part is basically sound, even though I doubt that Cartesian views of certainty had a central role in previous inaccurate or less than adequate interpretations.

The second part has some interesting proposals, but it provokes some questions. First, while I think his explication of a *diachronic* view of freedom is significant and that it undoubtedly makes a difference to our view of faith, still, I am not convinced that his interpretation of the role of the will in faith in Aquinas is accurate. On Jenkins' view the will seems to play only an *indirect* role in the act of faith. On Jenkins' interpretation, one's bad character could block one's seeing the divine origin of the gospel; but once one sees, by a supernatural *lumen fidei*, that it has a divine origin, there seems no need any more for any action of the will. But Aquinas describes the act of faith as an act of the intellect, moved by the will (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 4, a. 1). Moreover, Aquinas describes this act of the will as being motivated by a definite good (while the intellect is moved by a truth), namely, the promise of eternal life (*Ibid.*, q. 5, q. 2). That seems to suppose some sort of definite act of the will, as opposed to just a good character.

Secondly, I am not convinced that on Aquinas's view the motives or signs of credibility are as extrinsic to the act of faith (merely disposing one to be attentive) as Jenkins' interpretation claims. He certainly is right in rejecting the naturalist interpretation, but on Aquinas's view it seems that the light of faith enables one to see or appreciate the signs of credibility themselves. Jenkins is right that this often occurs by an immediate, non-discursive perception. But what one might perceive, by the light of faith, and one's free will disposing one to see, is the sublimity of the teaching, or the miraculous character of the liturgy or the life of the Church, or so on. In other words, the signs of credibility themselves are either perceived in a certain way through the light of faith, or obscured by one's pride or other vices.

Thirdly, while it is difficult to apply contemporary classifications to a medieval thinker, still, I doubt that Aquinas can be categorized as neatly as Jenkins does (following Eleanor Stump) as an *externalist* regarding epistemic warrant. I doubt this because Aquinas's notion of propositional knowledge as a knowing that one knows, and thus as essentially reflexive, seems to include in the completed act of knowing an implicit awareness of the essential orientation (or design) of the intellectual act and of the intellect to truth (see, e.g., *On Truth*, Q. 1, article 9, *Summa Theologiae*, Pt I, Q. 16, a. 2). Awareness, on some level, of signs of credibility, while not the sole or even the primary mover (motive) in the act of faith, do seem to play for Aquinas an essential role in helping to assure the believer that his act is not done lightly (*leviter*)—see *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. II-II, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3).

This is a very worthwhile book. It accomplishes many things, among them, setting out an original interpretation of Aquinas's notion of *sacra doctrina*, or theology, and an interesting, provocative interpretation of him on the light of faith. The book also bears witness to the tremendous wealth and depth of Aquinas's work.

*Faith and Understanding*, by Paul Helm. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. Pp. viii, 212.

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This book examines and evaluates the relationship between faith and philosophy as that relationship is expressed in the tradition of "faith seeking understanding." The first three chapters offer a general survey and exposition of the tradition. The last five chapters consider case-studies, particular exemplifications of the tradition: Augustine's account in the *Confessions* of time and creation, Anselm's understanding of faith and reason in the first four chapters of the *Proslogion*, Anselm's understanding of the incarnation, Jonathan Edward's account of original sin, and John Calvin's notion of the *Sensus Divinitatis*.

Helm holds, together with the classical proponents of the faith-seeking-understanding tradition, that philosophy is a help-mate rather than an enemy of faith. I am entirely in agreement with him here. In fact, the point seems to me somewhat more obvious than Helm takes it to be. (Perhaps I